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## THE FUNDAMENTAL THOUGHT AND PURPOSE OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW,

Translated from the Introduction to PROF. ROBERT KÜBEL'S *Exegetisch-homiletisches Handbuch zum Evangelium des Matthäus*.<sup>1</sup>

By H. B. HUTCHINS.

1. The data contained in the gospel of Matthew itself for answering the question as to its fundamental thought and purpose:

a. Old Testament citations. It is a familiar fact that Matthew and the other two Synoptists differ very widely in the number of their citations from the Old Testament. Where the evangelist himself is speaking citations occur in the following places in Matthew: i. 23; ii. 15, 18, 23; iii. 3; iv. 14-16; viii. 17; xii. 17-21; xiii. 35; xxi. 4 sq.; (xxvi. 56); xxvii. 9 sq.; xxvii. 35 (not well attested). In Mark, where he himself is speaking, we find citations only in i. 2 sq. (xv. 28 is not genuine); in Luke, only in ii. 23; iii. 4. Both Mark and Luke, for example, in the account of the triumphal entry, omit even the very evident citation from Zech. ix. 9, and in Luke even the narrative of the birth contains no citations. In the discourses of Jesus also, as reported by the evangelists, Matthew has more citations than both the others. Mark has no citations which are not found in Matthew (in a sense xii. 29 is an exception); Luke has only iv. 25 sq. and xxii. 37. Furthermore, in Matthew the citations contained in the discourses of Jesus are in part especially significant; thus, the word of Hosea (vi. 6) twice used by Jesus against the Pharisees (ix. 13, xii. 7), is not found in the parallel passages in Mark and Luke. The same thing is true also in the case of the second Old Testament example for Sabbath desecration, Matt. xii. 5. As to the sermon on the mount, from which v. 21 sq. might properly be considered here, we shall speak at length further on. The manner also in which the citations are made is significant.

<sup>1</sup> All quotations from the Greek have been translated into English.

The formula which Matthew uses almost constantly, "that it might be fulfilled," and the like, which also occurs in John xii. 38, and xviii. 9, is never found in Mark and Luke in their own discourse (Mark xv. 28, not genuine). All this goes to show at least that to Matthew the things of especial importance are in general the confirmation of the New Testament by means of the Old, and in particular the proof that, and how, in Christ the Old Testament promise is fulfilled, that is, has become a reality.

*b.* Expressions in this gospel which clearly present in its contents, and especially in its presentation of Christ, the mental attitude of the evangelist towards the Old Testament. The following data belong in line with what has just been said, in so far as they treat of the relation to the Old Testament as respects fulfilment. Matt. i. 1 is, to be sure, not the superscription of the entire book but only of chapter i. Yet the designation "Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham," shows at all events the category under which the author intends chiefly to place Jesus. In this connection compare Mark i. 1 (where "Son of God" is not to be struck out) and the whole of John i. 1 sq. "Jesus the Christ the promised son of David," is undoubtedly the theme of this gospel. With this view agrees the fact that the genealogy is carried back only to Abraham, and also its conclusion, i. 16. But the fulfilment of the Old Testament has also a negative side which is very prominent in Matthew. That the thought of Christ and of this entire gospel is first of all presented in antithesis with that of the scribes and Pharisees of the time, who claimed to be the representatives of the Old Testament, that the apprehension and fulfilment of the Old Testament correctly given by Christ is set in sharp contrast to the apprehension of the scribes and Pharisees, scarcely needs proof. The influence which the conflict of Jesus with the Pharisees exerts upon the contents and arrangement of the gospel is sufficient evidence. Of the other synoptists, it is true, Mark has nearly all, and Luke most, of the sections bearing on this point. But, besides what was quoted above in relation to Matt. ix. 13, xii. 7, and xii. 5, it is noticeable that only Matthew, and he as early as ix. 34, reports a case of calumny by the Phar-

isees; only he brings forward the sharp word against them in xv. 13, 14 (Luke vi. 39 is something entirely different), the parable of the two sons, with the biting word against the Pharisees (xxi. 28-32), the anti-Pharisaic discourse, chapter xxiii., as one complete and definitive testimony, and finally the narratives xxvii. 62 sq. and xxviii. 11 sq. Still further, it must be taken into consideration that in Matthew the sermon on the mount, entirely different from the account of Luke (the Paulinist!), is controlled almost throughout by the opposition to the Pharisees and their righteousness; v. 20-vi. 18 may be said to be completely so controlled.

We are accordingly quite justified in the assertion that the diametric opposition between Christ and the Pharisees is much more important to the purpose of this gospel than to that of Mark or Luke. And certainly it is worthy of remark that, since the opposition of John to the Jews is at all events something similar to the opposition of Matthew to the Pharisees, it is precisely the two apostolic evangelists who make that opposition a matter of central importance for their presentation of the gospel history. But the antithesis of Christ in the gospel of Matthew relates not merely to the Pharisaic conception of the Old Testament, especially of its law. The reformed-legal view, which Wichelhaus especially among the later commentators on Matthew represents, is thoroughly one-sided, and therefore incorrect. According to this view, in his opposition to the Pharisaic interpretation and application of the law Jesus throughout completely acquiesced in, recognized, and in no respect whatever "destroyed" the Old Testament law itself. To be sure, v. 17 sq., must be recognized as affirming the positive, that is to say, the spiritually positive, validity of the law. And since to this passage Mark has no parallel at all, and Luke only a relatively weaker parallel, it therefore belongs to those passages which show with especial clearness Matthew's interest in exhibiting the "fulfilment" of the Old Testament through Christ. Add now to this, still from the sermon on the mount, Matt. vii. 12, where the confirmatory assertion, "This is the law and the prophets," has likewise no parallel in Luke vi. 31 (still less in Mark). Moreover,

passages like Matt. xxii. 34 sq. and its parallels must not be forgotten, as they have a bearing on the positive attitude of Christ towards the law. But some sort of antithesis to the Old Testament law is undoubtedly presented in the opposition of the phrases, "It was said to those of old time," and, "But I say," which is found only in Matthew—v. 21, 22, 27, 28, 31, 32, 33, 34, 38, 39, 43, 44. For "It was said" introduces without doubt, in this case at any rate, words of the Old Testament, and to these words, not merely to the Pharisaic interpretation of them, Christ opposes his "But I." Luke vi. 27 is of an entirely different nature. That something similar is contained in the expressions regarding Sabbath observance cannot be denied. In addition we have the *argumentum ex silentio*, an argument truly significant in the case of a Jewish Christian, that this gospel contains not a syllable to indicate that the kingdom of heaven brought by Christ, or rather to be brought by him, is such a kingdom of God as the law affirms, and the prophets have for the most part painted an Israelitish and externally splendid divine state under the descendants of David. The word of the Lord, "My kingdom is not of this world," preserved, to be sure, not by Matthew, but by the other apostle among the evangelists, is perfectly appropriate to the Christ of Matthew. According to all that we have just said the fulfilment which Christ brings to the Old Testament is a fulfilment by means of which the Old Testament, its law and its prophecy, is raised to a new, even to the spiritual, stage. Everything concerning it and in it is certainly affirmed, but only so affirmed that it accords with this new stage, that of the spirit. Furthermore, it must be considered that only in Matthew is the passing over of the kingdom of God from the Jews to the Gentiles announced as early as viii. 11, in the affair of the centurion, the first man in regard to whom the word "faith" occurs in Matthew (cf. Luke vii. 9; xiii. 28 sq.). In the parable of the husbandmen also, though Mark xii. 9 and Luke xx. 16 have the thought in the parable itself, yet in the speech of Jesus which is connected with the parable and directed against the Pharisees they do not have the express words, "The kingdom of God is taken from you,"

etc., Matt. xxi. 43. It forms a sort of contrast to this position, however, that Jesus' prohibition to his disciples to enter on any way of the Gentiles and Samaritans (Matt. x. 5), as also the word in answer to the Canaanitish woman, "I am not sent," etc., (xv. 24), are preserved only by Matthew (cf. Mark vii. 27). On the other hand again, only Matthew reports the universal missionary command of the departing Lord, xxviii. 19. For Mark xvi. 15 must be passed over as hardly genuine. Luke, indeed, on his part has the event (xxiv. 47), but he fails to give the solemn closing command. Another point from the sphere of the difference between Matthew and the other two synoptists which might be presented here will be brought out later. If we gather together all that has been here cited we shall perceive that Matthew aims to show that what Christ brings is something new, and yet the old, the kingdom of God promised by the Old Testament, which, however, breaks through the Old Testament limitations. And it breaks through these limitations, first in its spirit and its teaching, in so far as the law of Christ is the spiritual law of life and not the law of the letter,—then in its extent, in so far as this kingdom was originally offered to the Jews, but being rejected by them it passes over to the Gentiles,—and lastly in the manner and method in which Jesus plants and extends it, in so far as he, first of all, for purposes of teaching, held himself within the Old Testament limits, but with perfect clearness, from the very beginning, and more distinctly from stage to stage, he unfolded his conception of the kingdom of God as the all-embracing kingdom of the spirit.

c. Views peculiar to Matthew. Here we shall consider only three points, the conceptions of the kingdom of heaven and of righteousness, then the (Christian) community, and finally a special feature of the portrait of Christ. As is well known the name "the kingdom of heaven" belongs exclusively to Matthew. Matthew brings this name forward in part in the interest of a positive connexion with the Old Testament—for it reminds every reader immediately of Dan. ii. 44, and chapter vii. 27, in part again in opposition to Jewish ideas—for it checks all expectation, conceived in a merely temporal earthly

fashion, of an externally splendid Jewish Messianic kingdom. How far, because of the essentially eschatological conception of the kingdom of heaven (cf. especially iii. 2), the worldly expectations are justified, it is not our purpose here to investigate. For in this case the question is not in regard to something peculiar to Matthew. On the other hand again, the close connexion of the conception of "righteousness" with the kingdom of God, and in general the exalted significance of that conception, is peculiar to Matthew. The word "righteousness," used of the good and of the condition of the citizens of the New Testament kingdom, is totally foreign to Mark and even to the Pauline Luke (except i. 75), while the latter has the verb "justify" in the Pauline sense in xviii. 14 (the sense is different in Matt. xii. 37). In Matthew the righteousness brought by Christ (v. 6) and demanded by him (v. 20) comes into sharp opposition to the Pharisaic righteousness. It has been remarked already that righteousness of life, regarded likewise by Matthew as the fulfilment of the Old Testament law of God, comes out much more clearly than in Mark and Luke. In Mark the word "law" is altogether wanting, and in the conversation about the first commandment xii. 28 sq., the word of Jesus already quoted about 'the whole of the law and the prophets' (Matt. xxii. 40) is not given. Luke puts "law" into the mouth of Jesus only twice, xvi. 16, and xxiv. 44—both times of the book of the law.

The significance of the word "church" in Matthew is something still more remarkable. Only Matthew, as is well known, has the two expressions of Christ in regard to his community, xvi. 18 and xviii. 17. In the first passage the lack of this word of Christ in Mark and Luke is especially remarkable, because both nevertheless (Mark viii. 27 sq., Luke ix. 18 sq.) relate the occasion, the confession of Peter. Even the "Interpreter of Peter," Mark, says nothing of the assignment of the keys of the kingdom to Peter! Luke vii. 3 sq. has a short parallel to the second passage (Matt. xviii. 15 sq.); but he also says nothing of the "church," though it is the same Luke in whose second writing, the Acts, the "church" is nevertheless so frequently mentioned.

But still further, the entire section Matt. xviii., although Mark and Luke contain some parallels, has this peculiarity that only in Matthew is the purpose clearly evident of collecting here such words of Jesus as relate to the inner circle of disciples or brethren and their duties. The word and the idea "brethren," as applied to the members of the specifically Christian community, generally retreats into the background in Mark and Luke in comparison with Matthew (Matt. v. 22 sq., 47; vii. 3 sq.; xii. 48 sq.; xviii. 15, 21, 35; xxiii. 8;—in Mark only iii. 34 sq.;—in Luke only vi. 42; viii. 21; xvii. 3; xxii. 32, although the expression is frequent in the Acts). We see that in the eyes of Matthew the community of Christ stands forth clearly as a distinct, organized union of believers in Christ separating itself from the Israelitish community. The idea is similar to that of John, the other apostolic evangelist, who, it is true, does not speak of the "church," but does emphasize brotherly love. The words of Christ bearing on this point are also especially important to Matthew.

Finally, there is a feature of the portrait of Christ which is peculiar to Matthew, and which leads us to an entirely different point. It may now be briefly touched upon. We do not now refer to the fact that Matthew uses for Jesus, "son of David," as also "king," sometimes alone, as in xxv. 34 sq., sometimes with "of Israel," etc., much more frequently than do Mark and Luke. Compare the interesting parallels Matt. xxi. 5; Mark xi. 10; Luke xix. 38. But the following points are especially significant. Only Matthew (viii. 15) sets down the healing work of Jesus as fulfilling Isa. liii. Only he in general (cf. with Mark and Luke) transfers to Christ the deuterio-Isaianic idea of the "Servant of God." Luke, however, frequently employs this idea in the Acts. And the description of Jesus as the tender shepherd of the flock of the people—a description especially enjoyed by Matthew and frequently given in detail—agrees well with this idea (Matt. iv. 23 sq., cf. Mark i. 39; Matt. ix. 35 sq., cf. Mark vi. 34; Matt. xv. 29 sq.). At the same time this description comes into rugged contrast with the rejection of Jesus on the part of Israel, whose terrible word (xxvii. 35)



Matthew again is the only one to report. It is precisely the servant and the shepherd rejected by his own people who gathers to himself a new flock from among the Gentiles who have been hitherto shut out from the kingdom of God.

*d.* The sections and the most important single words peculiar to Matthew. Chapters i. and ii.: the genealogy (cf. Luke as above), the birth, the Magi, the flight into Egypt, the return, the settlement in Nazareth; all permeated with Old Testament citations, and obviously subservient to the chief point of view already presented, "Jesus the promised Messiah," iii. 14, 15—a conversation between Jesus and John; note especially, "to fulfill all righteousness," iv. 13–16—a citation from Isa. ix.; iv. 23–25 (already treated), also chapters v.–vii.; not only does this as one great discourse from the standpoint of "righteousness" in the sense spoken of above occur only in Matthew, but in it are also several passages which are peculiar to him; note v. 5, 7, 8, 10 (several beatitudes), 13 (in part), 14, 16, the children of light, 17–20 (already treated, the fulfilment of the law), 21, etc., "it was said to them of old time, but I say," etc. (already treated), 21–24, the fifth commandment, 27–32, the sixth commandment (Mark and Luke have parallels, not to this passage, but to Matt. xix.); vi. 1–8, 14–18, alms, prayers, fasting; vii. 6, "that which is holy" and "the dogs," 12 (already treated), 14b, 15, 16a, the narrow way and the false prophets; viii. 11, 12 (already treated), 17 (already treated); ix. 13 (already treated); ix. 27–38, the two blind men, the dumb man, the first insult by the Pharisees, etc.; x., the discourse on sending out the apostles; not only does this great unified discourse occur as a whole only in Matthew, but there are in it also several passages which are peculiar to him; note x. 5, 6 (already treated), 8, "freely," 16, wise and harmless, 23, nearness of the Parousia, 25, if they have called me Beelzebub, etc.; xi. 28–30, invitation to the weary; xii. 5, 7, 17 sq. (already treated), 36, 37, the idle word, 40, the sign of Jonah (different from Mark and Luke); xiii. 24–30, 36–43, parable of the tares, 35, citation relating to parables, 44–52, parables of the treasure, the pearl, the net, final word; xiv. 28–31, Peter on the water; xv. 13, 14,

24, 29-31 (already treated); xvi. 17-19 (already treated), 28, observe the announcement of the future in Matthew as compared with Mark ix. 1 and Luke ix. 27; Matt. xvii. 20, because of your unbelief (little faith), 24-27, narrative of the stater; xviii. 10, the angels of the children, 15-35 (already treated); xix. 10-12, eunuchs; xx. 1-16, the workers in the vineyard; xxi. 4, 5 (already treated); xxi. 10, 11, the people acknowledge Jesus as the prophet, 16, citation from Ps. viii. 28-32, 43 (already treated); xxii. 6, 7 (cf. Luke xiv. 16 sq.) reference to the destruction of Jerusalem—chapter xxiii., not only does this great unified discourse, concluding the anti-Pharisaic contest, occur as a whole only in Matthew, but there are in it also several passages which are peculiar to him, *e. g.*, 2, 3; note especially, "What they say, that do, but . . .," also 5, 8-11, 15-22, 24, 28; xxiv. 10-12, 20, neither on the Sabbath, 29, immediately, 30, sign of the Son of man; xxv. 1-13, the ten virgins, 14-30 (? cf. Luke xix. 12 sq.), 31-46, the judgment discourse; xxvi. 15, the thirty pieces of silver, 63 cq., the oath administered by the high priest to Christ, 72, the first oath of Peter's denial; xxvii. 3-10, the death of Judas (cf. Acts i. 16 cq.), 19, the wife of Pilate, 24, 25, Pilate's handwashing and the outcry of the people, 51b-53, the earthquake and the appearance of the dead after the death of Christ, 62-66 and xxviii. 11-15, the watchers at the tomb; xxviii. 2-4, the angel rolls the stone away, 9, 10, the meeting of Jesus and the women, 16-20, the final appearance and the last word of Christ.

Now this collection, in which of course we could not consider the minor verbal variations from Mark and Luke or one of them, gives occasion for the following reflections: The number of sections and words peculiar to Matthew is relatively not very great. If all the passages were arranged consecutively we should have six or seven chapters of the average length of the chapters of Matthew—that is, not quite one-quarter of the whole Gospel. The greatest peculiarity is to be found in the discourses and parables. Luke indeed has more parables peculiar to him than Matthew has. And as to the discourses, it is to be carefully noted that it is not the amount of material

contained in Matthew which is the most significant peculiarity of the gospel, but rather the collection into long connected discourses of material which in the others, especially in Luke, is scattered through the entire book. We cannot here discuss further the bearing of this point on the question of the author and style of the gospel. The point which we now emphasize is that the gathering together of these long discourses and discourses of the character of these is indicative of Matthew's chief thought and purpose. In an expressly doctrinal discourse at the very beginning (v.-vii.) Jesus expounds the program of his kingdom and its righteousness in opposition to the Pharisees; in an expressly missionary discourse (x.) we have the calling and lot of his disciples; in a long chain of parables (xiii.) he shows, on the one hand, again his kingdom and its development, and, on the other, how the knowledge of it is a mystery for the great mass of obdurate people; in a series of connected discourses (xviii.) he depicts the life of his "church"; in a great decisive discourse (xxiii.) he breaks with the Pharisees and the Judaism led by them; in an eschatological discourse running through two chapters (xxiv., xxv.) he teaches how his community must prepare itself for the Parousia. Thus there is given a formal, thorough, and comprehensive "teaching" concerning the truths which, as we have already observed, are the most important for Matthew. If we can gather these points together somewhat as follows, "The relation positive and negative of that which Christ brings to the Old Testament, especially the negative in opposition to the Pharisaic Judaism; the kingdom of heaven, not an external Jewish kingdom, appearing, however, at the Parousia as a kingdom of glory; the "righteousness" of the citizens of the kingdom; the Christian community which they form as "brethren" in especial communion with one another; all of which is lost to the Jews, because they have rejected the tender shepherd and the servant of God": then all that is necessary is to show, in regard to some of the passages quoted as peculiar to the Gospel, how they fit in with this point of view. In the Magi (ii.) the first Gentiles adore a Messiah, unrecognized by Jerusalem, its king, its scribes, and its people. At the baptism (iii. 15)

Jesus says to John, "It becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." To the Old Testament prophecies referring to Jesus belongs also "the sign of Jonah," which is at the same time, however, a sign of judgment against Israel, xii. 40. Although he is as Son of God free, he submits himself to the duty of paying the temple tax, xvii. 24 sq. He is to come as the glorified king of the kingdom, xxiv., xxv., and he will come soon, xxiv. 29. Finally, he acknowledges himself as the Son of God, xxvi. 64; even Pilate's wife confesses him, xxvii. 19; through him the bodies of the Old Testament saints come to life, xxvii. 51 sq; as Lord of the world he gives his final command, xxviii. 16 sq. It is evident that the fundamental point of view already given in i. 1 is determinative for all these points. Besides the points already discussed at length, xxvii. 62 sq. and xxviii. 11 sq. also belong to the conflict with the Pharisees. Even their last device against Christ fails. Then, besides the points already touched upon, the following points also are necessary for the depicting of the righteousness of his kingdom, both as to the manner in which one enters it, and as to the manner in which one conducts himself in it: The exposition of the commandments, etc., v. 21 sq. vi. 1 ff, vii. 14 sq., the invitation, xi. 28 sq., the parables, xiii. 44 sq., the passage regarding eunuchs, xix. 10 sq. Concerning the disciples of Christ, their call and their lot in the world note, v. 14 sq. vii. 6, x. 5 sq., 16, 25, xx. 1 sq. But Christ finds 'little faith,' and 'no faith,' even in the circle of the apostles, although he has been solemnly confessed. Although Mark has preserved the strongest expressions in regard to the hardness of the disciples' hearts (vi. 52, etc.), yet the words in Matt. xvii. 20, the accounts of Peter, xiv. 28 sq. xxvi. 72, and single expressions from the warning example of Judas, xxvi. 15, xxvii. 3 sq. are peculiar to Matthew. Although the disciples formed a peculiar band of brethren, they were, nevertheless, still thought of as Jews, xxiv. 20, "neither on the Sabbath"—according to the usual conception of this passage; moreover, the question here is only in regard to the Palestinians. On the other hand, as has been shown, the passing over of the kingdom of God from the Jews to the Gentiles is a matter of especial importance to the author.

With the destruction of Jerusalem, this passing over ensues as the final rejection of the Jews (though not without hope of future restoration, xxiii. 39).

We come now to a quite special point, which perhaps enables us from the intimations already gained respecting the purpose of the gospel to reach a definite conclusion as to the time-relations of the author. Only Matt. xxii. 7, in the parable of the marriage of the king's son (Luke xiv. 16 sq.), gives the reference to the destruction of Jerusalem. Only he has "immediately," xxiv. 29. The difference between Matt. xxiv. 15 and Luke xxi. 20 is obvious. And if here Mark xiii. 14 also goes along with Matthew, even with the parenthetical challenge, "Let him that readeth understand," which surely in both gospels proceeds from the writer and not from Jesus, it follows that the expression of the latter, "standing in the holy place," is more precise than the "standing where it ought not" of the former. If we take all these things together, and in addition consider such passages as xxvii. 25, viii. 11, xxi. 43, then—whatever may be the case with Mark and Luke—it can be said of Matthew at any rate (setting aside first the question of sources), that he wrote at a time when the destruction of Jerusalem was immediately impending, and it was especially important not merely to give his readers instruction for their behavior in this crisis, but to show to them how it was now evident that the destruction of the Jewish theocracy was a righteous judgment of God, and the passing over of the kingdom of God from Israel to the Gentiles, even as it was sealed by this destruction, was the just consequence of the rejection of Jesus by his own people. We need not here discuss other questions suggested by the passages cited (*e. g.* "immediately"), which are of such special significance for the relation of the destruction of Jerusalem to the Parousia. All we need to note is that the "immediately" (and passages like x. 23) show that Matthew deemed it especially important, in the manner of an Old Testament prophet, *e. g.* Joel, to teach the reader to recognize in the great events of the time, which prove the justice of God, the immediate harbingers of the day of the Lord and the completion of the kingdom.

[Continued in next issue.]